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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of a California state mandated effort to reduce dropout rates. In particular, the analysis looks at which program components and strategies are successful in increasing school holding power and what organizational and administrative factors are linked to the decision to actually implement the program as designed. Section I of the analysis describes the legislated program and its outcomes, including assessment of the value of specific techniques (such as early identification of at-risk students, the value of parent involvement, and career training programs). After brief discussions of program components (an outreach consultant, student study teams as a dropout prevention methodology, school site councils in dropout prevention, and school-based coordination) in section I, section II explores the issues by examining linkages between specific program components or techniques and improvement in overall school holding power. Linkages are also examined for specific gender and ethnic target groups and the impact of the program on lower grades. Section III moves to mapping the program context, and examines the link between adoption or emphasis of the state program elements and roles played by three major institutional actors (the outreach consultant or program coordinator, the school principal, and the relevant oversight units of the California State Department of Education). Included are 15 tables and 4 figures. (JB)

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Measuring Implementation: Lessons from Improving School Dropout Performance in California Schools

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Presenter: Donald A. Dixon

Passed in 1985, the Motivation and Maintenance (M&M) component of California's Senate Bill 65 (SB 65) contained a number of innovations drawn from both field experience and from research literature on improving school holding power. In principle, its major program elements included reforms such as school-based coordination of program resources, a quasi-case management approach to dropout prevention, involvement of parent and community resources in the school planning process, and the creation of a new, community-oriented position--that of outreach consultant--whose role was intended to provide an alternative connection between the high-risk student and the traditional school hierarchy. Despite their relative familiarity conceptually, effectiveness of these programs elements has had only limited empirical validation. Equally importantly, since implementation of these elements represents major changes in the way in which many schools operate, there is little information on what organizational preconditions are required for such reforms to be adopted and effectively implemented.

This paper examines two inter-related, but typically unconnected questions: 1) what program components and strategies appear to be successful in increasing school holding power, and 2) what organizational and administrative factors appear linked to the decision to actually implement the program as designed. Examples of the first question include assessments of the value of specific techniques, including the utility of early identification of at-risk students, the value of parent involvement, career training programs and the like. Of equal importance, is the impact of program support and emphasis by schools for each of the program's major elements: outreach consultant, student study teams, school planning processes, school based coordination and in-service training of staff. Building from a brief program background, Section II of the paper explores this question by examining linkages between specific program components or techniques and improvements in overall school holding power. Linkages are also examined for specific gender and ethnic target groups, and the impact of the program on lower grades. Section III moves "backward" in its mapping of program context, and examines the linkage between adoption or emphasis of SB 65 program elements and roles played by three major institutional actors; the outreach consultant (or program coordinator), the school principal, and the relevant oversight units of the California State Department of Education.

Section I: Background & Outcome

Programmatically, the SB 65 Motivation and Maintenance program is a relative rarity in public policy, representing an attempt to implement, on a pilot basis, a number of experimental school holding techniques. A 1991 legislatively mandated analysis of the program [1] found many of those techniques to

[1] Dixon, Donald A, C. Jones & S. Brian *Implementing Innovation: Effectiveness of SB 65 Motivation & Maintenance Programs in Improving School Performance & Holding Power,* December, 1991, SRA Associates, Sebastopol, California (707-829-8567)

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be relatively successful in improving school holding power. While alone SB 65 does not "solve" the dropout problem, where the program has been implemented dropout and graduation rates have been significantly improved. While dropout rates differ greatly by ethnic and gender group, high schools which implemented these elements were able to decrease their overall dropout rate during the 1986 to 1991 period. Elementary and middle schools appear to have improved their third- and eighth-grade CAP scores. Yet, not every participating school was successful. Despite successes for a majority of schools during the first two years, only 44 percent of SB 65 M&M high schools have been able to continue their improvement during the first five years of program operation. The key to the difference between success and failure appears to be the level of district support, and commitment and ability to undertake the sometimes fundamental change envisioned by the program.

In its design, the SB 65 program anticipated the consensus which appears to be developing in recent research and practitioner literature on those factors influencing a student's decision to leave school.[2] Beyond obvious problems related to social background and economic status, students are profoundly affected by "school culture" considerations; including policies, informal norms, formal school structure, and attitudes of teachers and staff. As many students are probably "pushed out" of school as dropout; a fact officially denied, but consistently confirmed in both research literature and in our convèrsations and surveys of principals, teachers, program administrators, and outreach consultants.

From this perspective, the most critical part of SB 65 was an attempt to address school culture considerations through creation of the new outreach consultant position. As envisioned, the need was to create an "advocate" position for at-risk youth within the school hierarchy; creating a sort of "pressure group" within the school culture. Whether implicitly or explicitly, the outreach consultant was seen as a way of articulating the needs of high-risk students in a bureaucratic and organizational setting; one which historically has focused more routinely on higher achieving groups. The position of outreach consultant, while not changing this situation structurally, was designed to become the "squeaky wheel" constantly redrawing attention of both teachers and administrators to the at-risk population.

Other key aspects of the Motivation and Maintenance portion of SB 65 legislation built from this attempt to refocus attention of school site personnel on the needs of high-risk students. The requirement that SB 65 M&M schools become involved in a community-based planning process, implement Student Study Teams, institute school-based coordination of categorical funds, develop community resources, and initiate in-service staff training programs on high-risk youth were all attempts to refocus school attention and effort toward meeting the special needs of at-risk students and thereby increasing school holding power. Significant linkages were found between program success and the degree to which all these elements were implemented. Schools which implemented these program elements were successful; those that failed to do so were not.

The Outreach Consultant

There is ample evidence that where integrated into a school's administrative culture, the outreach consultant position has a significant impact on improving school holding power. Possibly due to size, elementary and middle schools appear to have been more successful at achieving integration of the outreach consultant into their professional staff. At these school levels, the outreach consultant makes a

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[2] For example see, LeCompte, M.D. and A.G. Dworkin, *Giving Up on School: Student Dropouts and Teacher Burnouts*, Corwin Press, 1991, Smey-Richman, B., *School Climate and Restructuring for Low-Achieving Students*, Research For Better Schools, Philadelphia, PA (1991) or Dale Mann, "Can We Help Dropouts? Thinking about the Undoable" and Natriello, Pallas and McDill, "Taking Stock: Renewing our Research Agenda on the Causes and Consequences of Dropping Out", both in Natriello (Ed.) *School Dropouts: Patterns and Policies* Teachers College Press, NY (1986).

major contribution to providing services to at-risk students. At the secondary level, there is both less understanding and commitment to the function of the outreach consultant as a mechanism to increase school holding power. While secondary principals report that outreach consultant services are effective, there appears to be conflict and lack of support for the position from counseling and guidance personnel. Principals are not sufficiently clear about the function and job description of the outreach consultant to dampen this conflict.

Further integration of outreach consultants into the school culture depends upon both greater role clarity by principals regarding the outreach consultant, and better familiarity of the outreach consultant with the overall goals, methods, and objectives of SB 65. Given relatively rapid turn-over of principals and (more recently) outreach consultants at SB 65 schools this clarity is difficult to ensure.

Student Study Teams as A Dropout Prevention Methodology

This case-management approach offers the greatest possibilities in increasing school holding power, but is unlikely to be implemented fully. While there is little doubt that the Student Study Team (SST) process works and is extremely effective in assisting at-risk students, the process is extremely resource intensive and because of this serves relatively few students. Proper use of the Student Study Team requires participation of the outreach consultant, parents, guidance and counseling personnel, teachers, and other service providers. The average school holds approximately three SST meetings each week, typically before or after regularly scheduled school activities. There is great variation between schools in terms of their understanding, use and commitment to the SST methodology.

The Role of School Site Councils in Dropout Prevention

An unexpected finding in this study was the relationship between program success and the value placed upon the school site council planning process. In those schools where outreach consultants and principals reported high levels of acceptance and interaction with the School Site Council, improvement in school performance was generally evident. This improvement was true of both the California Assessment Program (CAP) score and dropout improvement rate.

Since School Site Councils are not involved in providing direct services, what was measured here was the impact of a school climate which placed a high value on community advice and opened school decision-making to parents, staff and members of the community. Schools which have a more "open" decision process are apparently better able to respond to specific demands of at-risk students. It is possible to speculate that, as with successful integration of the outreach consultant into the school's hierarchy, active participation in school decision-making by School Site Council members served to sensitize the school culture to the needs of the high-risk population and to shift them higher on the school's scale of internal priorities.

School-Based Coordination

School-based coordination appears to be the least understood and the most resisted element of the SB 65 program. Until 1991, the Department was unclear whether school-based coordination was a mandatory or permissive portion of the SB 65 legislation. At both the district and school level, there is almost total lack of clarity regarding this concept, its intent, or methods of implementation. Based upon the experience of years of prohibition about mixing funds and upon the cost of combatting the outright opposition from those controlling various types of programs, site and district administrators were often unwilling to use resources in a way required by a school-based approach.

Given evidence linking school-based coordination with improved s..ool performance, and given

the increasing interest in integration of school, health, and social services programs, there remains a clear rationale to increase school-based coordination to a meaningful level.

Section II - Implementation & Outcome; Elements of SB 65 That Work

Two strategies were followed in examining linkages between program elements and successful outcome. The simplest method was to examine differences between high-and low-performing schools. Schools considered high-performing in this part of the analysis were the top one-third of the sample of both SB 65 and comparison schools in terms of dropout rate reduction.[3] By examining differences in priorities, program content, and attitude among high- and low-performing schools, patterns of implementation can be linked to successful and unsuccessful outcome. A second method examines the same relationships using associative techniques for all SB 65 schools. While a correlative rather than a causal model, this part of the analysis examines the extent to which a single factor, such as degree of outreach consultant integration into the school culture or level of support by the principal, is associated with program success.[4] While not conclusive, the results of both methods of analysis suggest strongly that where fully implemented, many elements of SB 65 are linked to dropout reduction and improvement in achievement test scores.

Table II.1

Program Factors Linked To Decrease
in 3-Year Cohort Dropout Rate
(Correlation Coefficients)

	Cohort Both	Cohort Male	Cohort Female
Congruence	.32	.27	.29
District Support	.23		
School Stability	.22	.25	
Importance SSC to Principal	.21	.23	
Number of SSTs	.21	.19	.21
Commitment to OC	.19		.22

Significant Program Priority Differences
In High and Low-Performing Schools

	School Performance High	Low	Significance (2-Tailed)
Program Factors*			
OC's Commitment SB65	4.0	3.1	.04
Congruence	3.4	2.0	.05
Integration of OC	3.8	3.2	.07
Overall Support	4.3	3.7	.08
Support for OC	4.2	3.3	.09

*Note: Mean scores on a 1 to 5 scale (1=low 5=high).

There are, of course, important limitations to correlative findings. While study results suggest an important set of relationships, it is not claimed that SB 65 program elements exclusively "caused" such improvements. It is hard, for example, to know whether a factor such as support for the outreach consultant, which seems closely linked to program success among female students, is not part of larger school climate considerations. Schools which show high levels of support for the outreach consultant generally have succeeded in decreasing dropout rates. What is uncertain is whether this support enabled

[3] While the comparison group of 200 low performing, non-SB 65 schools is not included in the analysis which follows, they were used in ranking schools into "high," "average," and "low" performing groups. The measure used was changes in the three-year cohort dropout rate. The means for the groups are as follows: High Performing: SB 65 schools -10.8 Comparison -10.7. Average: SB 65 schools -2.9 Comparison -3.1 Poor: SB 65 school +5.6 Comparison +6.3. There is no statistical difference between the means of SB 65 and Comparison schools within each performance group.

[4] Unless noted, association values are based upon a Pearson's *r* correlation coefficient or, for categorical data, a Kendall's Tau-*b*/*c*. Unless otherwise specified, significance is accepted at the .01 level. Student's *t* was used to assess differences between high- and low-performing schools. Given the relatively small number of cases, significance of *t* is accepted at the 90 percent level of confidence.

the outreach consultant to "cause" the change, or whether the support itself emanated from an overall school commitment to institute such changes. School cultures and the interaction among program, administrative structure, and individuals, both staff and students, are too complex to allow certainty. It is significant, to continue the example, that in schools where performance failed to improve, support of the outreach consultant was not evident.

Linkages Between SB 65 Program Components and Changes in High School Dropout Rates

Change in the three-year cohort dropout rate is most closely associated to five factors: the congruence level between the outreach consultant's ideal program and the one which has actually been implemented; levels of district support for the program; the importance placed by the principal on the School Site Council planning process; stability of the school administrative structure; and overall commitment by the outreach consultant to the SB 65 program.

When differences in SB 65 implementation between high- and low-performing schools are assessed, schools which significantly decreased their overall dropout rate had an outreach consultant with a strong commitment; high levels of congruence between the outreach consultant's view of effective program strategies and those which they have been allowed to implement; a program which successfully integrated the outreach consultant into the school culture; and a high level of overall support for the program by the principal and others. In addition, the level of personal support perceived by the outreach consultant was significantly higher in high-performing schools.

Table II.2

Difference in Emphasis of Program Techniques and Strategies in High- and Low-Performing Schools

(Mean scores of responses)

Strategies and Techniques	School Performance High	Low	Significance
Outreach consultant	4.5	3.6	.03
Early identification	4.5	3.4	.01
Career awareness and preparation	4.1	3.2	.01
In-service training	3.8	3.1	.06
Parent involvement	3.7	3.0	.08

*Note: Significance of the difference between the mean scores of the two groups is two-tailed. Emphasis scale is based on principals' assessment of importance and effectiveness of various factors in dealing with at-risk students (5 is a very high emphasis, 3 is average, and 1 is very low).

Strategies and Techniques Linked to Decrease in Three-Year Cohort Dropout Rate

	Correlations
In-service Training	.33
Career awareness & preparation	.31
Early identification	.27
Parent involvement	.26
Number of SST's	.23
Outreach consultant	.23
Number served	.19

Beyond such general factors as levels of community resources or degree of integration of the outreach consultant into the school culture, assessment was also made of the effectiveness of a variety of program components and techniques and their linkage to overall program outcome. Principals were asked to assess the importance of each of these elements in dealing with at-risk students. While not a direct measure of the degree of implementation, the principals' assessment constitutes an indication of priorities at a specific school.

Among programs which were emphasized as important by successful schools were the outreach consultant program itself, early identification of high-risk students, career awareness and preparation programs, in-service training by outreach consultants of other staff personnel, and parental involvement. Principals in schools which had greater success in decreasing dropout rates were significantly more likely to emphasize these strategies as effective, in contrast to schools where there was little or no improvement.

- Alternatively, if associations between program strategy and overall performance for all schools

are examined, rather than the difference between high- and low-performing schools, the picture which emerges is similar, although two additional factors are significant: the frequency with which the SST process was used and the number of students actually served by the SB 65 outreach consultant. As these factors increased, dropout rates decreased. Emphasis on all seven strategies, however, appears linked to improvement in dropout scores. In order of importance, these were: in-service training of school staff on dropout prevention and recovery (.33); development of alternative career and work experience programs (.31); early identification of potential dropouts (.27); parental involvement (.26); number of SST meetings actually held (.23); principal's emphasis on outreach consultant program (.23); and the number of students actually served by the SB 65 program (.19). The emphasis by principals on Alternative Education and Work Center (AEWC) programs as a successful dropout prevention strategy parallels findings in the SRA Associates' *Against All Odds* study (1990) of the portion of the SB 65 program dealing with AEWC and Educational Clinic programs.

Table II.3

Program Factors Linked to Increase in 12th-Grade Reading Scores
(All Schools)

Program Factors	Correlations
School-based coordination	.44
Importance School Site Council to principal	.35
School stability	.32
Overall support SB 65	.29

Difference in Program Factors
High- and Low-Performing Schools

	School Performance		Significance
	High	Low	(2-Tailed)
Program Factors*			
Importance SSC to principal	3.7	3.0	.01
Overall support SB 65	4.3	3.7	.04
School stability	4.2	3.1	.07
Effectiveness of superintendent in getting SB 65 resources	4.2	3.7	.07
District support SB 65	3.9	3.5	.08
Importance of SSC to OC	3.0	2.4	.09

*Note: Mean scores on a 1 to 5 scale (1=low 5=high).

Strategies which were not considered effective at high-performance schools, and which showed no statistical relation to improving dropout rates across all schools, included parent training, private-sector partnerships, attendance incentives, promotion with special assistance, or an articulated transition program. Several of these strategies were linked with positive results among students from specific ethnic or gender groups.

Linkages Between Program Strategies and Changes in 12th-Grade Reading Scores

Implementation levels and the priority assigned to SB 65 program components were also linked to improvements in twelfth-grade standardized reading scores, although the pattern of importance differs slightly from those linked to dropout reduction. Program factors linked to improvements in reading scores include the principal's emphasis on school-based coordination (.44), the importance placed by the principal on the School Site Council planning process (.35), school stability (.32) and overall support for the SB 65 program (.29).

Analysis of the difference between low- and high-performing schools reveals several additional linkages between the program and reading score improvements. In addition to the principal's assessment of the importance of the School Site Council planning process, support for SB 65 and school stability, an additional factor associated with high-performance schools was the outreach consultant's view of overall effective support of the SB 65 program. Among high-performance schools, the outreach consultant was significantly more likely to see the program as effective; in low-performance schools, assessment of overall program effectiveness and support for the program was lower.

Specific techniques which appear associated with reading score improvement include the school's emphasis on parental involvement (.35); in-service training of staff in how to work with high-risk students (.27); establishment of a school-within-a-school (.26); development of an articulated transition program (.24); career awareness and preparation programs (.24); private-sector partnerships (.22); attendance monitoring (.22); and early identification of high-risk students (.21). With the exception of parental involvement (.40), changes in average math scores are not linked to any particular technique or program component. Math score change was linked to specific program elements within various ethnic groups.

Table II.4

Techniques and Strategies Linked to Increases in 12th-Grade CAP Reading Scores

Strategies and Techniques	Correlations
Parental involvement	.35
In-service training	.27
School-Within-A-School	.26
Articulated transition program	.24
Career awareness and preparation	.24
Private-sector partnerships	.22
Attend monitoring	.22
Early identification	.21

Emphasis of Techniques and Strategies in High- and Low-Performing Schools

	Performance		Significance
	High	Low	(2-Tailed)
Techniques and Strategies*			
Parent involvement	3.7	3.0	.09
Early identification	4.2	3.5	.09

*Note: Mean scores on a 1 to 5 scale (1=low 5=high).

Important differences in strategies between high- and low-performing schools included differences in the values assigned to parent involvement and early identification of at-risk youth. In higher-performing schools, these strategies or techniques were more likely to receive greater emphasis from the school principal.

Linkages Between Program Strategies and Changes in Overall Graduation Rates

Linked to changes in dropout levels, the rate of graduation is also affected strongly by students' academic performance. Remaining in school for four years, while reducing the dropout rate, is not in itself sufficient to graduate. Changes in graduation and dropout rates, while significantly correlated (-.22), are not identical. Among both program and comparison schools, as dropout rates fall, graduation rates move upward; there is not, however, a one-to-one correspondence.

As might be expected, therefore, relatively fewer of SB 65 program components and strategies relate to improvement in graduation rate. While not strictly part of this evaluation, a brief description of these relationships is included here for purposes of completeness.

Surprisingly, factors which appear most closely linked between program component and improving graduation rate measures include the assessment by both the principal (.32) and the outreach consultant (.30) of the importance of the School Site Council in the school planning process. As assessments of importance increased, graduation rates increased. Since the Site Council is not involved in providing direct services, this measure probably assesses the extent to which the school is attempting to implement a consultive planning model, and hence is at least partially a measure of responsiveness to community needs. Confirmation of the importance of these factors is also found in assessing differences between high- and low-performing schools. In high-performing schools there is greater importance attached to the Site Council process by both princip.; and the staff. In addition, a relationship exists

between congruence of the outreach consultant's view of effective program strategies and those which they have been allowed to implement. Where the SB 65 outreach consultant sees a match between ideal and actual strategies, the school is more likely to be in the higher-performing category.

Specific techniques which appear associated with improvement in graduation rates include only two: the emphasis placed by the principal on the SB 65 outreach consultant, and the importance attached by these two to in-service training on high-risk youth.

Table II.5

Significant Program Priority Differences
in High- and Low-Performing Schools

	School Performance		Significance
	High	Low	(2-Tailed)
Program Factors*			
Importance SSC School	3.4	2.6	.02
Importance SSC to Principal	3.8	3.0	.07
Congruence	3.7	2.5	.09

Strategies and Techniques Linked to
Increases in Graduation Rates

	Correlations
Outreach Consultant	.28
In-service Training	.27

*Note: Mean scores on a 1 to 5 scale (1=low 5=high).

Ethic and Grade-Level Differences in Dropout Rate Improvement

Viewed from the aggregate level, schools which improved their tenth grade dropout rates were also able to improve rates in the eleventh and twelfth grade. Our previous research, however, has emphasized that even in the same school, dropout rates vary widely by ethnic and gender group. Fluctuations in dropout rates follow a similar pattern: changes in the female hispanic tenth-grade rate are correlated only weakly with changes in the eleventh-grade rate, or with the rates for males, or for other ethnic groups. As might be expected, therefore, while there is a great deal of overlap, the list of factors which are associated with program success vary by gender and ethnic group, and by grade level.[5]

Linkages Between Program Strategies and Changes in School CAP Scores

Since dropout statistics are not yet kept for students below the tenth grade level, one of the few common measures of program performance across schools are changes in CAP scores. SB 65 high schools were chosen for their high dropout and low socio-economic levels. They are also schools which have CAP scores well below the state averages on both reading and math. In California, at the high school level, there is a relatively high relationship between CAP score and dropout rate; as dropout rates increase, CAP reading scores generally decrease. Among SB 65 and comparison schools, the relationship is even stronger than statewide; especially when rates of change are examined. At a statistically significant and relatively strong level of association (-.30), schools which have decreasing dropout rates typically have

[5] While space limitations prevent discussion here, it should be added that different ethnic groups exhibit even greater differences in the patterns of linkage between dropout rate reduction and program components and strategies. Complete discussion of these differential impacts is found in Dixon, et'al *Implementing Innovation*, SRA Associates, Sebastopol, CA 1991. (Also available from the School Interventions Unit, California State Department of Education, 1992).

improved their CAP reading scores.[6]

Middle and elementary schools that participated in the SB 65 program are also low socio-economic schools with typically low reading and math scores. While no dropout data on these schools exist, the relationship at the high school level between improving school CAP scores and improvement in dropout rate suggests an that an examination of CAP score change would provide a possible measure of the success of SB 65 programs at the elementary and middle school level. The section below, therefore, examines linkages between SB 65 program components and strategies discussed earlier and changes in school CAP score performance.

Linkages Between Program Strategies and Changes in 8th Grade CAP Scores

Eighth-grade students in M&M schools performed quite well, increasing their average reading score by over ten points and their math score by more than fourteen points. Implementation of the various components of SB 65 programs were related to the increases in the CAP reading and math scores. The importance of two of the critical components of an M&M program, the Student Study Team and the School Site Council, were highly correlated to improvements in both math and reading scores. A third major component, school-based coordination, correlated with improvements in both reading and math scores, but the relationship was not quite as strong. Those schools that placed a high value on these elements of program design, performed better than those that did not. The perceived effectiveness of the fourth major component, outreach consultants, distinguished the high-performing schools from low-performing schools. While most principals found that their outreach consultants were effective, those from the highest performing schools were nearly universal in assessing the effectiveness of the outreach consultant at the highest possible level.

Table II.6

Techniques and Strategies
Linked to Increases
in 8th Grade CAP Reading Scores
Correlations

Strategies and Techniques	
School-within-a-School	.26
Career awareness and preparation	.22
Systematic attendance monitoring	.21

Middle schools that set clear goals and priorities, communicated them effectively, and fully integrated elements of the SB 65 program into their school culture, also showed more of an improvement in their CAP scores. Schools which were judged to provide overall support for the program both at the school site and from the district also increased their CAP scores more than those that did not.

At the schools where average CAP scores improved the most, support from the State Department of Education was judged less harshly than schools where average performance did not improve. Either this is because the schools actually received more support and assistance from the Department or because the better performing schools felt that they did not require a greater level of help from the State Department of Education.

High performing schools on the math test also were more stable and lived in an environment of less political conflict between the school board, superintendent, and the community than did low performing schools. An atmosphere of political conflict and turmoil can be quite upsetting and interfere with teaching and consequently, learning at the school site.

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[6] This linkage is even stronger between overall changes in reading and dropout score improvements. The association between increasing CAP reading scores and decreasing three-year cohort rates for both male and female White students is -.36; for female Afro-Americans its -.35 and female Asians it is -.34.

The outreach consultants at those schools with the most improvement in their math scores were quite involved with a variety of policy-making activities at the school. They were well integrated into the school environment and given authority to exhibit some influence in their areas of expertise.

CAP scores showed the most improvement at the middle school level, and those schools which were the most successful on these tests had the most fully integrated SB 65 program. They appear to have fully implemented the various components of the program and, at least the school principals judge these components as effective and important.

Only three specific techniques and strategies are correlated to change in eighth-grade reading scores, and these correlations are not as high as those found for the program components. The strategy with the highest correlation (.26) is the establishment of a school-within-a-school, a strategy which is seen by many as increasingly appropriate for the middle school students. The other two techniques are career awareness and preparation programs and systematic attendance monitoring. No techniques or strategies distinguished the high performing schools from the low performing schools.

Table II.7

Techniques and Strategies
Linked to Increases
in 8th Grade CAP Math Scores

Correlations

Strategies and Techniques	
Systematic attendance monitoring	.30
Attendance incentives	.29
School within a school	.27
Early identification of at-risk youth	.26
Staff in-service on high-risk youth	.23

Difference in Emphasis of
Techniques and Strategies
High- and Low-Performing Schools

Means

	School Performance	
Strategies and Techniques	High	Low
Attendance monitoring	4.5	3.6
Promotion with special assistance	4.5	3.3
Student study teams	4.2	3.6
School within a school	4.2	3.0
In-service on at-risk youth	4.2	3.1
Attendance incentives	4.2	3.1

The list of strategies and techniques correlated with changes in math scores, however, is longer and the relationships are stronger. Both systematic attendance monitoring and attendance incentives are related to improvement in math scores for eighth-graders and these also distinguish between the high-performing and low-performing schools on the math test results. Those schools which place more emphasis on these attendance measures are doing better than those which do not. Those schools judging these strategies as effective are most likely more efficient at getting their students to come to school where they are able to gain the knowledge necessary to do better in math.

The establishment of a school-within-a-school distinguishes between the high- and low-performing schools on math as does providing staff in-service training on at-risk youth and encouraging promotion with special assistance. The Student Study Teams are judged to be more effective at those schools which have improved their math scores the most than those which were low-performers on this measure.

Overall, using improvement in CAP scores, those M&M programs at middle schools which took their grant from the state and fully integrated the components of the program and established effective attendance monitoring and incentive programs have shown the most improvement in both reading and math scores.

Linkages Between Program Strategies and Changes in 6th Grade CAP Scores

The sixth grade presents a very different picture than the eighth grade. On the average sixth-grade CAP scores changed very little. Some sixth grades are found in elementary schools with third-grad-

ers, some are in middle schools along with the eighth grade, and a few are in schools with neither. Many more M&M schools had decreasing sixth-grade scores than had decreasing eighth-grade scores. Because the sixth grade is often linked with other grades that may be showing CAP score improvement, principals and outreach consultants were likely thinking of other measures when they were judging the effectiveness of their programs. The only program factor correlated to a change in sixth-grade CAP scores is the number of students served by the outreach consultant. However, this is not actually a program factor since it can be influenced by the size of the school. The more legitimately related program factors such as the effectiveness or importance of the SST process are not related to changes in sixth-grade reading or math scores.

Table II.8

Program Factors, Strategies, and Techniques
Linked to Increase in 6th Grade Reading Scores

Number of SST cases	.29
Career awareness and preparation	.25
District support	.18
Systematic attendance monitoring	-.28

Emphasis of Program Factors
High- and Low-Performing Schools

	School Performance	
	High	Low
Private sector partnerships	4.0	3.1

District support for the program is weakly (.18) correlated to changes in the reading score. The one strategy that distinguishes high- and low-performing schools in the sixth grade is the effectiveness of private sector partnerships. This technique is not related to improvement in scores in either the third or eighth grades.

Table II.9

Program Factors Linked to Increase
in 6th Grade Math Scores

Private sector partnerships	.20
Number served by the Outreach Consultant	.17
Systematic attendance monitoring	-.17
Number of SST per month	-.19
Congruence	-.31

Emphasis of Program Factors
High- and Low-Performing Schools

	School Performance	
	High	Low
Private sector partnerships	4.0	3.1

Several strategies appear to be backfiring when looking at sixth grade scores. Systematic attendance monitoring is negatively correlated to improvements in these scores. In other words, those schools which have judged themselves having the most effective attendance programs are showing the least improvement in their CAP scores. Also the schools which have the most SST meetings per month are showing less improvement on their math scores than those which have fewer meetings. This may be indicative of a link between low-achieving students and the number of SST meeting held at the school site.

The last, and unfortunately highest correlation (-.31), on changes in sixth-grade math scores is the measure of congruence between what the outreach consultant sees as the ideal program and his or her assessment of the current emphasis on various components of the program. At the sixth-grade level, programs which are judged to be further from the ideal are performing better than those where the outreach consultant sees a match between the ideal and actual strategies. Again, this may be reflective of the respondents not considering sixth-grade student academic achievement when assessing the program.

Linkages Between Program Strategies and Changes in 3rd Grade CAP Scores

For the third grade, M&M schools had mixed results in CAP score changes; average reading

scores went down while average math scores moved upward by a small amount. Several program strategies correlated, although not very highly, to improvement in reading scores. These included the principal's assessment of the effectiveness of an articulated transition program, attendance incentives, and the early identification of at-risk youth.

Table II.10

Program Factors Linked to Increase in 3rd Grade Reading Scores

Program strategy effectiveness	.37
Articulated transition program	.19
Number of SST cases	.18
Attendance incentives	.16
Early identification	.15
Influence of outreach consultant on school policy-making	-.15
Educational level of outreach consultant	-.28

One element of full M&M implementation negatively correlated to reading score improvement. Outreach consultants who were given more influence and say in policy-making at their schools tended to be at schools which fared less well on the reading tests. This is related to the fact that outreach consultants at the higher performing schools in third-grade reading had less education than those at schools that performed worse on this measure.

The highest correlation to improvement in both reading and math scores was an composite index measuring effective dropout prevention strategies. This index correlated to the change in reading scores at .37 and to change in math scores at .34. This may be indicative of different strategies being effective in different school environments and also the variability in program implementation.

Table II.11

Program Factors Linked to Increase in 3rd Grade Math Scores

Effectiveness of program strategies	.34
Importance of School Site Council	.26
Parent advisory committees	.22
Attendance incentives	.16
Number served by outreach consultant	.16
Early identification of at-risk youth	.15
Educational level of outreach consultant	-.20

Emphasis of Program Factors
High- and Low-Performing Schools

	School Performance	
	High	Low
Parent advisory committees	3.9	3.4

The importance of the School Site Council and the effectiveness of parent advisory committees correlated to math score improvement. Schools which had an open planning and decision-making processes related to their programs showed a greater improvement in math scores than those that did not. The higher performing schools in math believe in and use these committees at their schools.

Attendance incentives and early identification of at-risk youth are two program strategies that correlate with math improvement as well as reading improvement in the third grade. Elementary schools, where the outreach consultant serves more students, also show a slightly better rate of improvement in math scores.

Overall, since there are not a lot of high correlations between CAP score improvements and these measures of program implementation and integration at both the third- and sixth-grade levels, elementary school outreach consultants and principals were likely assessing much broader changes and impacts within their schools when answering questions related to the effectiveness of various SB 65 program elements, strategies and techniques.

Section III: Linkages between School Environment & Successful Implementation

Beyond the linkages between levels of implementation and school success, it is also necessary to examine the preconditions of implementation. Given a successful set of program components or reforms -- even allowing for differential success with differing ethnic and gender groups -- what organizational preconditions were required for such reforms to be adopted and effectively implemented?

In the case of our research on the SB 65 program, an attempt was made to move "backward" into the program context; to examine the linkage between adoption or emphasis of SB 65 program elements and roles played by three major institutional actors; the outreach consultant (or program coordinator), the school principal, and the relevant oversight units of the California State Department of Education. What is being argued is that, since implementation of various elements represent potentially major changes in the way in which many schools operate, it is necessary to explore the organizational and administrative factors which appear linked to the decision to actually implement the program as designed. In some sense our results were hardly surprising. Intuitively, programs which operate in supportive environments would seem more likely to be successful than those which must overcome administrative hostility or indifference. SB 65 programs were no different. The degree to which the SB 65 program was implemented (and hence successful) was highly related to levels of principal support and attention. Support for the outreach consultant by teachers and other administrators was also highly correlated. Equally interesting however, in the era of dissatisfaction with "top-down" programs and skepticism about the value of state-level oversight and technical support, schools which implemented the program as designed (and hence were successful in reducing dropout rate or improving CAP scores), had a higher levels of SB 65 related contact with staff at the State Department of Education.

Outreach Consultant: Support & Impact In the School Envirnonment

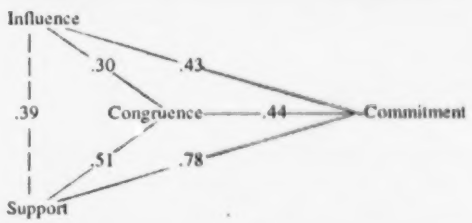
Four general types of measures were considered in our examination of the programmatic environment of the SB 65 outreach consultant:

- measures assessing the relationship of the outreach consultant to their school culture, including perceptions of personal influence over the decision-making process and support from other school officials;
- measures examining outreach consultants' commitment to the program and acceptance of the techniques and programs which were being utilized at their school;
- measures of outreach consultants' perceptions of two principal SB 65 program elements: Student Study Teams and school-based planning involving the School Site Council;
- measures of job alienation or "burnout."

In both site visits and surveys of SB 65 program personnel we were struck by the strong linkages between job and organizational characteristics, outreach consultant attitude and commitment to the program. There was also a strong relationships between organizational factors and the outreach consultants' feelings of accomplishment and degree of job burnout.

The degree of support given to the outreach consultant by principals, teachers, district officials, and other school personnel was strongly related to both commitment and the consultant's sense of accomplishment. Statistically the correlation was extremely high (.78) between support and commitment. There was also a strong interrelation (.39) between support received and the amount of influence the

outreach consultant perceives on making educational and program decisions. This was unsurprising, since both influence and support probably reflect the value a particular school places on the SB 65 program. The more the program was supported, the more influence the outreach consultant was likely to have within the decision-making process. Influence (.30) and support (.51) were also closely related to the degree of congruence between what the outreach consultant felt the program should do and what s/he was able to do. Both congruence (.44) and levels of influence (.43) were also strongly related to overall commitment by the outreach consultant to the SB 65 program. Unsurprisingly, the greater the levels of support, influence, and congruence between the consultant's view of what the program should do and what s/he was allowed to do, the greater the levels of commitment.[7]

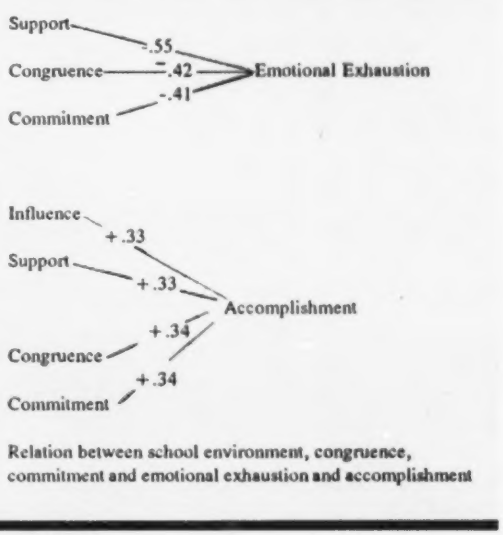


Relation between school environment, congruence with consultant's ideals, and overall commitment

Figure III-1

These interrelations have two programmatic effects: they were closely related to the overall burnout level of the outreach consultant, and they affect the valuation and utilization of two of SB 65's major elements, the SST process and the School Site Councils.

Two measures of burnout were found to be especially relevant to the outreach consultant: emotional exhaustion and a sense of accomplishment. As might be obvious, the relationship (-.28) between these was negative--as emotional exhaustion rises, the consultant's sense of accomplishment typically diminishes. Emotional exhaustion[8] -- feeling at the end of the rope or constantly tired when thinking about work--has a very high negative correlation (-.55) with the level of support given to the consultant. If administrative support was forthcoming, then this measure of job burnout was heavily reduced. There was also a high correlation (-.42) between the congruence index and emotional exhaustion. It was difficult and frustrating for consultants to work in a program that does not emphasize the areas they feel were important. As the program changes to reflect more of their personal values, the levels of exhaustion diminish. Commitment was also closely related (-.41) to this aspect of burnout. The greater the commitment levels, the lower the chance that consultants will feel burned out by their activities.



Relation between school environment, congruence, commitment and emotional exhaustion and accomplishment

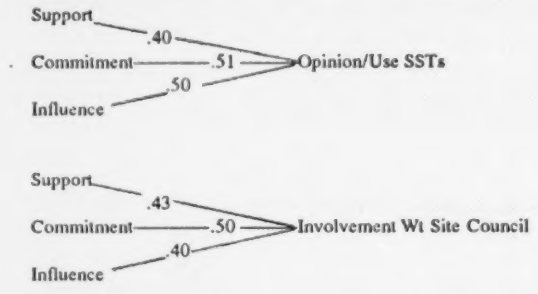
Figure III-2

[7] Although these diagrams may resemble path analysis charts, these are graphic representations of Pearson's r correlations. Unless otherwise noted, all correlations reported are significant to the .01 level.

[8] As reported elsewhere, this section relies upon questionnaire items from the standard Maslach Burnout Inventory. See also Dixon, *Implementing Innovation*, 1991.

The only school culture and program variable that was not correlated to emotional exhaustion was the amount of perceived influence the employee has over school policy. At least among this group of employees, the degree of control over policy matters was not related to feelings that one's job has become too frustrating or too arduous.

The opposite of burnout was a sense of accomplishment. Overall, as indicated earlier, consultants typically had a high sense of accomplishment. Feelings of accomplishment, however, were linked to levels of support, congruence, influence, and commitment. Consultants who report high levels of support were likely (.33) to have a higher level of personal achievement. Similar patterns were found between perceived levels of influence (.33) and commitment (.34), and accomplishment levels. As influence and commitment increased, so too did the sense of accomplishment. Congruence between what the outreach consultant wanted and was allowed to do also were linked (.34) to a sense of accomplishment. The more the program matched the consultant's ideal, the greater the likehood of feeling that something of value was being accomplished.



Relation between influence, commitment and support and acceptance of program components

Figure III-3

Levels of outreach consultant commitment, influence, and support also affected perceptions and utilization of two of SB 65's major elements, the SST process and the School Site Councils. A strong relationship (.51) exists between levels of outreach consultants' commitment and their utilization and evaluation of the SST process. The greater the level of commitment, the more likely they were to both value and use the SST process more often. Similar relationships were found between support (.50) and influence (.40). As administrative support increased, and the outreach consultant's influence in the school decision process grew, the use of the SST increased. Although at the core of SB 65 program design, SST's represent a difficult, time-consuming and resource-intensive methodology. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the degree of implementation and acceptance of this technique was linked to both the outreach consultant's commitment and the school's willingness to provide programmatic support.

Similar, although sightly weaker, relationships were found in examining the use and valuation of the School Site Councils in the program-planning process. There was a strong relationship (.50) between outreach consultants' commitment and their involvement in and evaluation of the School Site Council process. The greater the level of commitment, the more likely they were to both value and be more involved with the School Site Council. Support (.40) and influence (.43) also influenced opinion and participation. As administrative support increased, and the outreach consultant's influence in the school decision process grew, involvement with the School Site Council increased.

Support by Principals - Organizational Integration of SB 65

In addition to examining factors impacting the outreach consultants, our research also explored the degree to which principals at the SB 65 sites support the program as a whole, and at the levels of commitment they perceive among others who are significant actors in the M&M program. Critical to program success are strong support and encouragement by the administrators responsible for overseeing SB 65 pilot schools. As in similar research elsewhere, our findings indicate that the level of integration

into the school culture of SB 65 components is strongly related to outcome.[9]

The school principal plays a critical role in providing administrative support and, by example, in establishing SB 65 as a viable, effective program. While "wishing doesn't necessarily make it so," support, communication flow, commitment, perceptions of program effectiveness, and articulated expectations concerning outcome are all measures of administrative support of the aims, goals, and intent of the SB 65 legislation. In examining the role of principals, the inescapable conclusion was that where SB 65 was viewed as part of a school-wide, coordinated effort to reduce dropouts, the program works; where the program was viewed as another source of categorical funding, however minimal, it does not. In the worst case, the program was simply ignored; the outreach consultant becoming an extra hand in taking care of paper work, collecting lunch money, or handling lights in the school gym.

Principals' Assessment of SB 65 Program Components

Eighty-five percent of all principals surveyed felt the Motivation and Maintenance program was "very important" at their school site and was an effective means of preventing student dropouts. Although this percentage does not differ greatly across grade levels, elementary principals are slightly more likely to view SB 65 as important. Eighty-eight percent of the elementary principals see SB 65 as highly relevant to preventing dropouts, compared to 83.8 percent of middle school principals. High school principals show a slightly lower (80%) agreement with this assessment. Only five respondents saw the program as of "little or no value."

Administrative assessment of generalized program importance, however, does not determine organizational priorities. It is quite possible to be supportive of a program in the abstract, while ignoring program components in terms of resource allocation. In accepting the SB 65 grant, the schools agreed to develop a variety of program components including Student Study Teams, School Site Councils, and the new position of outreach consultant. In addition, SB 65 schools were supposed to implement school-based coordination of resources, develop community resources and partnerships, and ensure staff in-service training on techniques of working with high-risk youth. These constitute a fairly extensive list of program elements, and principals were asked to rate each component in terms of its effectiveness.

Assessments of SB 65 program component effectiveness covered a full range of responses. In general, however, elementary principals were likely to rate more program elements as "very effective" than were middle or high school principals.

Administrative Environment of SB 65 Principals

Program success also requires strong support and encouragement by district administrators. In practical terms, this implies a measure of administrative autonomy, sufficient resources, and district commitment and cooperation. Principals were asked the degree to which these elements were available to them in their role as site administrator.

While district-level commitment to the SB 65 program was viewed as relatively high, both generalized support levels and measures of specific support were substantially lower. About half of elementary (51%) and three-fifths of middle school (61%) principals report a "high" level of district commitment. High school principals, who saw lower levels of support for SB 65 generally, also report lower

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[9] See *Education Policy Implementation* (1991), edited by Allan R. Odden, especially "Learning from Experience: Lessons from Policy Implementation," by Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin. This is an older article discussing the degree to which implementation studies need to focus upon attitude and organizational culture.

levels of administrative commitment; only 34 percent rated district commitment as high.

Table III.1

Percent of Principals Reporting
High Levels on Measures of
District Support for SB 65 Program

Types of Support	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
District commitment to SB 65	51.2%	60.5%	34.1%
Administrative autonomy	42.9%	21.6%	35.0%
District encourages OCs to work as a team	41.7%	42.1%	29.3%
Generalized district support	35.7%	26.3%	25.0%
District encouraged participation in summer workshops	32.9%	35.1%	29.7%
Staff have necessary materia	28.9%	25.6%	10.0%
Frustration over resources	21.7%	30.8%	30.0%
Sufficient district funding	18.1%	23.7%	30.8%

Administrative autonomy, latitude to adapt program design to local school conditions, is seen by many as another form of support. At the elementary school level, while principals generally feel that they have some autonomy in implementing the provisions of SB 65, they are less likely to feel that they have been able to get needed resources for the program from the district administration. Slightly less than 29 percent feel that the district has provided their staff with enough materials to do their job, and only 18 percent feel there are sufficient resources. Over one-fifth (22%) report feeling "highly frustrated" over having "so few resources and so much to do." At the middle school level there appears to be less administrative autonomy, equally strong perceptions about limited resources, and an even higher frustration level; sentiments echoed, with only slight variation, by high school principals.

Especially significant is the differential between levels of perceived district commitment and a measure of overall support. At elementary schools, there is a 16 point difference between administrative and overall support; among middle school principals, it increases to over 34 percentage points. At the high school level, principals perceive lower generalized support for SB 65, but they also report only about half of the district commitment reported by principals of lower grades.

Table III.2

Percentage of Principals Reporting
High Levels of Support
For Aspects of the SB 65 Program

Types of Support	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
At least weekly contact OC	85.7%	84.2%	78.0%
Support of outreach consultant	77.4%	63.2%	55.0%
Encouragement to try new methods	63.1%	71.8%	62.5%
Consultative decision-making	58.3%	48.7%	50.0%
Clear communication of SB 65 goals	47.6%	33.3%	37.5%
OCs encouraged attend SDE institute	42.5%	39.4%	29.7%
High clarity outreach consultant role	33.3%	39.5%	25.0%

Integration of SB 65 Program into School Culture

The school principal, as chief site administrator, also plays a critical role in providing leadership to integrate the SB 65 program into the school culture. This leadership is manifested in a number of ways, including support for the outreach consultant, clarity to both the consultant and the rest of the staff regarding expectations about the SB 65 program, consultation, encouragement of teachers and staff in trying new methods and techniques, and frequent contact with the outreach consultant.

Principals generally felt themselves to be highly supportive of the outreach consultant and the SB

65 program. Support seems generally higher in smaller, elementary school environments. Roughly four-fifths of all principals, however, report at least weekly contact with the outreach consultant.

The pattern of higher support for the SB 65 M&M program at the elementary level repeats itself throughout the principals' survey. Over three-quarters (77%) of elementary school principals and slightly more than half (55%) of high school principals saw themselves as providing "very high" levels of support for their outreach consultant. Almost 43 percent of elementary principals report urging their outreach consultants to attend the State Department's SB 65 Summer Institutes; at the high school level the proportion was one-quarter.

Two other measures seem especially important in assessing the administrative environment in which the outreach consultant operates: the degree to which principals clearly communicated their goals and expectations regarding the SB 65 program, and the level of clarity regarding the outreach consultant's role. While closely related in theory, at different school levels there is considerable divergence.

At the elementary level, one-third of principals report a high degree of clarity about the outreach consultant's role and almost half report that as principal they have clearly communicated SB 65 program goals to the entire school staff. There is a strong correlation (.44) between these measures.

At the middle school level, there appears to be more clarity about the outreach consultant's role, but slightly less communication with school staff about program goals. Principals who are clear, however, are more likely to report high levels of goal communication; the correlation (.68) is even stronger than at elementary schools.

In high schools, while 38 percent of principals report high levels of communication regarding program goals and objectives, only 25 percent report high levels of clarity regarding the outreach consultant's role. There is also no statistically significant correlation (.06) between the factors. This would suggest a major problem at the high school level in integration of the outreach consultant into the school culture.

Integration of SB 65 Into the School Environment

As noted earlier [10] two distinct patterns of outreach consultant acceptance into the school organization continue to exist. At one extreme, the outreach consultant (and the SB 65 program) have become an integral part of the school culture. Teachers, administrators, and others who are clear about the outreach consultant's role and about the program agree with the program's purposes and methods, and provide reciprocal support. Questions about these matters consistently elicit strong positive responses.

At the other extreme, negative responses to these measures indicate situations where the outreach consultant and the program have not been integrated into the school organization. At a minimum of five sites, for example, there was virtually open warfare between the principal and various factions within the school staff. The outreach consultant in these extreme cases was either allied with the "wrong" side, or ignored completely. In other cases, the program itself was seen as having little value, and the consultant was again generally ignored.

If these measures are viewed collectively, it is possible to suggest the degree to which the program has become integrated into the overall school organization. Responses to this measure of integration seems to confirm the two patterns suggested earlier: schools score either very high or

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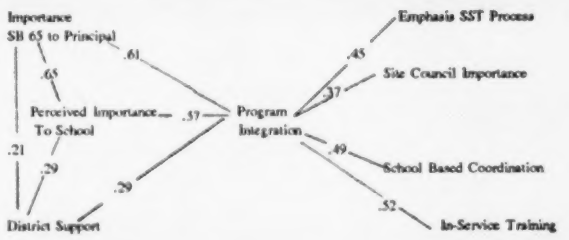
[10] Dixon, "Correlates of Effectiveness in California's Dropout Prevention Programs" Paper presented AERA Meeting, Boston, 1990.

relatively low on these measures. Most schools have integrated the SB 65 program relatively well into the school's organizational culture. Among elementary schools, 78 percent show a relatively high degree of integration of SB 65 goals and aims. As expected from earlier findings, middle school programs are less well integrated, with schools where SB 65 was well integrated totaling slightly less that 65 percent. Integration of SB 65 into high schools was still lower, with only 58 percent of principals reporting a high degree of program integration.

Linkages Between Integration and Program Emphasis

As noted throughout, SB 65's implementation is highly dependent upon the attitudes and priorities of the school principal. The degree to which the program has been incorporated or integrated into the school environment is closely connected to perceptions of importance of the principal and the support of others as perceived by the principal. There is a strong relation (.65) between the principal's own opinion and the principal's perceptions of the view of others within the school organization. Where support levels, both personal and perceived, are high, various goals and objectives encouraged by the SB 65 program have been well integrated into the school environment. The relationship between levels of program integration and the principal's view of staff perceptions is very high (.57); it is exceeded only by the relationship (.61) between integration levels and the principal's own view of the importance of the SB 65 program.



Relation between support, program integration into the school culture, and emphasis of program elements perceived as effective in dropout prevention.

Figure III-4 Linkages Between Organizational Environment & Program Emphasis

Levels of integration, in turn, are linked to the likelihood that the school will emphasize the various programmatic components of SB 65, including the use of the SST process, school site planning, school-based coordination and establishment of an in-service training program regarding high-risk youth. In general, the greater the level of integration of the program into the culture of the local school, the greater the congruence among the attitudes, goals, and objectives of the SB 65 program, outreach consultants, teachers, other staff personnel, and the principal, the greater the likelihood that these major program components will be seen as effective, therefore will be emphasized.

Oversight & Assistance: SB 65 Programs & the State Department of Education

The third institutional player in terms of promoting implementation is the California State Department of Education. Despite a growing questions about the effectiveness of administrative oversight within the implementation literature, schools which reported higher levels of contact with SB 65 related staff at the State Department of Education were significantly also more successful. While due in large part to the efforts of the consultant responsible for SB 65 programs, the State Department's role was extremely positive. Those schools which received oversight and technical support from the School Intervention's Unit were those which implemented the program as designed, and hence were successful in reducing dropout rate or improving CAP scores.

It should still be added that the amount of oversight and technical assistance supplied to SB 65 programs by the State Department of Education has been highly variable: both historically and currently.

At the program's inception, there appeared to be little Departmental interest in shaping implementation guidelines, ensuring compliance with program requirements, or providing training and technical assistance. With increased interest in dropouts and programs for high-risk youth, this situation changed somewhat between 1989 and late 1990. Since that time--and despite the continued activities of those SDE personnel most closely affiliated with the program--the Department's internal budget cuts, competing program priorities, and extensive reorganization have resulted in a net decline in program emphasis.

Prior to the 1989-90 program year, the State Department of Education provided little leadership or guidance on what was expected of the districts in meeting program requirements, on how outreach consultants should be utilized, and on how program components might be implemented. Outreach consultants were not given specific job descriptions, and districts were not told what kind of support they were expected to provide nor what kind of criteria would be used in evaluating program performance. The result, despite relative clarity in the legislation, was extreme variability in program implementation. The outreach consultant's job, for example, ranged from duties modeled directly on the authorizing statute to jobs of collecting hot dog money, serving as the principal's administrative assistant, and making sure the lights in the gym were turned off after the basketball game.[11]

By 1989, however, this situation had begun to change dramatically. With the hiring of a new manager of the (then) High Risk Unit, a slight expansion of the Unit's staff including a former outreach consultant as program facilitator, clear and detailed descriptions of the functions that an SB 65 outreach consultant could (and could not) perform were disseminated to the field. The portion of the High Risk Unit which monitored and provided technical assistance to the SB 65 schools was increased following heavy personnel cuts which had left only one incumbent staff person to handle the needs of a variety of programs and several hundred schools.

Among other activities which the Department initiated during the 1988-90 period, were Summer Training Institutes and conferences which offered training for outreach consultants, principals, and other school personnel. Offered in both northern and southern California in 1989 and 1990, these conferences and institutes were attended by outreach consultants and (to a lesser extent) their principals and district administrators. The result, for the first time, was a discussion of the function of outreach consultants and the level of support they could expect to receive from their districts.

By 1992 the priority assigned to the SB 65 program by the Department was again uncertain. While perceptions regarding the level of departmental interest, clarity and support generally improved, recent departmental reorganizations, budget cuts, and the continual reassignment of personnel left both principals and outreach consultants unsure both of whom to contact and the nature of the Department's future role. In addition, the Department now provides promotional or planning materials on at least three other dropout initiatives: C-LERN, SB-1274 and ESS. At the field level, the relationship between these programs and SB 65 remains unclear, and has resulted in further confusion among principals about the Department's goals and priorities.

Principals and outreach consultants were surveyed independently regarding levels of support and guidance they currently received from the State Department of Education. In addition, they were asked about contact and support in previous years and whether there had been improvement or decline in accessibility and guidance. Interestingly, there was relatively little difference overall in patterns of assessment among principals and outreach consultants; principals' reports of high levels of contact with the State Department were echoed by similar statements from outreach consultants at their schools.

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[11] SRA Associates, *Preliminary Report SB 65 Motivation & Maintainance Program*, California State Department of Education (1989), page 12.

Principals' View of SDE's Role

Principals viewed the State Department's role in oversight of SB 65 as one involving little contact and minimal guidance prior to 1988-89. Over two-thirds (68%) of principals reported very low levels of contact during the most recent year, and a roughly comparable proportion (65%) felt that the Department had provided little guidance in previous years. High schools reported the most contact, followed by elementary and middle schools. Perceptions regarding the usefulness of state guidelines prior to 1988-89 followed similar patterns: high schools found the guidelines most useful, followed by elementary schools and, at some distance, by middle schools.

Table III.3

Percentage of Principals Reporting High Levels of Contact, Guidance and Support from the State Department of Education

Types of Contact & Support	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Frequent contact with SDE this year	7.8%	5.3%	10.5%
SDE oversight increasing	58.5%	54.3%	61.5%
Clear guidelines prior to 1989	12.0%	8.4%	13.5%
Better guidelines since 1989	45.6%	38.3%	44.7%
SDE guidelines consistent	14.3%	14.3%	12.1%
High SDE Support of SB 65	16.0%	10.8%	20.5%

The Department's interest and oversight of the SB 65 program do appear to be increasing sharply. Almost 60 percent of principals felt strongly that SDE's interest in the program was increasing; and not quite half (44%) felt strongly that departmental guidelines and assistance had improved during the past two years.

Overall departmental support for the SB 65 program was seen as high by only 16 percent of SB 65 school principals; approximately 25 percent of the principals report "low" or "very low" levels of support. Unsurprisingly, perceptions of departmental interest and support are significantly related to the principal's assessment of the program's overall importance, the tendency to participate in SB 65 conferences and Summer Institute training programs, and somewhat more weakly to support for the SB 65 outreach consultant. Departmental involvement, by way of the linkage through assistance and oversight of program activities, appears to have significant impact on program outcome. The greater the level of perceived departmental interest and support, the greater the principal's support for the program (.24), training activities (.47), and the outreach consultant's activities (.20). In turn a high level of support from principals is related to program success.

Outreach Consultant's View of SDE's Role

Outreach consultants report significantly higher levels of recent contact with State Department of Education personnel than reported by school principals. Consultants, however, were even more likely to see a lack of departmental guidance prior to 1989. Slightly less than half (48%) of outreach consultants reported moderate to high levels of contact during the current year. More than two-thirds (69%), however, felt that the Department had provided little guidance in previous years.

Elementary schools and high schools reported roughly the same level of contact. Middle school outreach consultants report significant frequency of communication with the State Department. Outreach consultant perceptions regarding the usefulness of state guidelines prior to 1988-89 were similar to those of the principals, and were quite negative.

Table III.4

Percentage of Outreach Consultants Reporting
High Levels of Contact, Guidance
and Support from the
State Department of Education

Types of Contact and Support	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Frequent contact with SDE this year	24.4%	13.9%	21.3%
SDE oversight increasing	57.7%	58.4%	62.0%
Clear guidelines prior to 1989	18.7%	9.7%	6.8%
Better guidelines since 1989	59.0%	58.4%	57.8%
SDE guidelines consistent	11.8%	16.3%	16.3%

As with the case of principals, outreach consultants felt the Department's interest and oversight of the SB 65 program were increasing sharply. Approximately 59 percent felt strongly that SDE's interest in the program was increasing; a similar proportion (58.5%) felt strongly that departmental guidelines and assistance had improved during the past two years.

Outreach consultants were not asked questions regarding perceptions of the Department's overall support for the SB 65 program. Interestingly, however, the levels of contact between the school and departmental personnel appear related to several key factors, including whether the consultant was encouraged to attend the summer training programs, the clarity of the outreach consultant's duties, self-perceived acceptance by teachers and administrators, and levels of district support. Levels of departmental contact appear linked to a number of factors which have significant impact on program outcome, as with the principals. Outreach consultants reporting higher levels of contact with the Department were significantly more likely to have been encouraged to attend the summer institutes (.38), have a greater sense that they were accepted by other teachers and administrators (.28) and have a greater amount of clarity about their position and responsibilities (.25). They are also more likely (.37) to perceive levels of district report as higher than those without such contact.

Section IV: Conclusions

This paper has attempted to explore connections between successful dropout prevention strategies and the decision to actually implement those strategies at the site level. Section II, by empirically establishing which techniques were successful, yielded in Section III to a examination of the differences between schools which implemented these techniques and those which did not.

Section II established, in general, that change in the three-year cohort dropout rate was most closely associated with five factors: the congruence level between the outreach consultant's ideal program and the one which has actually been implemented; levels of district support for the program; the importance placed by the principal on the School Site Council planning process; stability of the school administrative structure; and overall commitment by the outreach consultant to the SB 65 program. In addition, successful schools showed had successfully integrated the outreach consultant into the school culture and showed high levels of congruence between the outreach consultant's view of effective program strategies and those which they have been allowed to implement.

Section III, attempted to examine the preconditions of implementation by moving "backward" into the program context; analyzing the linkage between adoption or emphasis of SB 65 program elements and roles played by three major institutional actors. For outreach consultants, who usually served as program coordinators, perceived levels organizational commitment to the dropout program, support from teachers and others, and a perception of their own sense of personal influence and efficacy were key in the decision to adopt program strategies. There was also a great deal of inter-relation between perceptions of commitment and support and the congruence between the outreach consultants' own goals and objectives and those they were allowed to implement.

Among Principals, the decision to adopt program strategies was strongly linked to how well the dropout recovery effort was integrated into the school's organizational culture. Where high levels of integration existed, almost all aspects of the program were implemented. Program integration, in turn, was dependent upon the principals' perceptions of importance of the program and the dropout problem, the importance of the program to the school and levels of district support and interest.

Perceptions of the role of the State Department of Education by both outreach consultants and Principals indicated that those implementing the reforms had greater contact with the SDE technical staff and were more likely to have received technical assistance. There was a significantly greater clarity regarding program guidelines, expectations and strategies among those school sites implementing the program than among those which did not.

As noted earlier, our results are hardly surprising. Programs which operate in supportive environments are significantly more likely to be successful than those which must overcome administrative hostility or indifference. SB 65 programs were no different. These results, however, are very preliminary and incomplete. As Odden, Natriello and others observe in a variety of contexts, there is still a need to integrate and expand our understanding of school processes as these affect or contribute efforts to increase school holding power.

Our results, however, do suggest a strong impact of organizational factors on the decision to adopt specific innovations and reforms. More work is necessary; undone is a continued and deeper analysis of the impact and interaction of structural, attitudinal and behavioral characteristics on program implementation. From a policy perspective, this 'third stage' research agenda may have the greatest payoff. Whether 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' adoption of reform appears dependent upon organizational culture and institutional factors. While our understanding of these has increased greatly in the past decade, we are still far from being able to adequately define organizational "pre-conditions" for successful program implementation. Although increasingly able to talk about what program elements are effective when implemented, we have yet to establish for the policy-maker what institutional or school cultural changes must precede (or parallel) a new program to insure its 'street-level' success.